



Non-Group Marketing and Outreach Contract (VOTE)

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Board of Directors Meeting, June 8, 2023

Overview

The Health Connector's outreach and public engagement work remains a central focus of its mission to enroll Massachusetts residents who need coverage.

- The Health Connector's (CCA's) Communications and Outreach team continues to drive a forward-leaning agenda aimed at (1) bolstering widespread awareness among the Massachusetts public about affordable coverage options; and (2) reaching and covering those without coverage
- CCA has historically augmented its outreach efforts with an external vendor to help carry out its outreach agenda
- Outreach and education has been centered on improving coverage in communities with higher uninsured rates, particularly communities of color and younger men in those communities
- Along with maintaining progress in those communities, CCA will define new populations that would benefit from Marketplace coverage, identify impactful messages and message platforms for those populations, and increase year-round awareness for people who need coverage outside Open Enrollment
- Since 2016, Archipelago Strategies Group (ASG) has been the Health Connector's non-group marketing and outreach vendor, and is currently on a one-year contract through the state blanket
- At the same time that CCA heads into a new contract with ASG, it is also planning to take steps to more formally evaluate the results and best practice learnings of its outreach work so that we can be sure CCA is maximizing impact

Outreach to the Uninsured

Generating enrollment in communities with higher rates of uninsurance remains the top priority for outreach activities.

- Challenges remain in connecting to people who are uninsured and creating awareness to available coverage and affordability options
- Uninsured residents remain younger, Hispanic or Black, are more likely non-citizens than the state on average, and have language barriers accessing coverage
- Uninsured residents are more likely to be lower-income, rent their housing, and face difficulty paying household costs
- Improving continuous coverage rates is a priority. 80 percent of non-elderly adults had year-round coverage in 2015-2019
- Lack of awareness of coverage options, affordability, and administrative and language barriers remain blocks to coverage
- Continuing and expanding outreach and support to residents in communities of higher uninsurance rates who are new to Massachusetts or needing coverage for the first time is fundamental to outreach efforts

Sources: Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation, “Closing the Coverage Gaps: Reducing Health Insurance Disparities in Massachusetts”, April 27, 2023; Center for Health Information Analysis, “Massachusetts Foreign-Born Residents, Particularly Non-Citizens, Are Less Likely to Have Continuous Health Insurance Coverage”, April 2023

Identifying New Populations

Using a variety of data sources, the Health Connector will define additional communities that are more likely to need Marketplace health insurance.

- Beyond coverage rates, sources that consider overall demographics, employment and the economy, and geography will help define new populations for outreach
- What populations are more likely to move in and out of Health Connector coverage, and how do we reconnect with them as necessary?
- What does the gig economy and sole-proprietor landscape look like post-Covid?
- What industries may be more susceptible to layoffs or closures, with workers requiring immediate coverage solutions?
- Who is most likely able to take advantage of subsidy available to higher income levels?
- Are there geographic or other factors that create critical mass of people turning 26?
- Can we identify previously unconsidered populations that would benefit from additional outreach and enrollment support?

Reshaping Messaging

Identifying new ways to talk to uninsured residents and expanding population types will require new messaging and creative use of platforms, ensuring high visibility no matter the size of the group.

- Interview focus groups, and reviewing existing research can help point to how to best connect with communities that were previously not part of our focus
- What messages resonate with higher-income populations, including those who would qualify for minimal or no subsidy?
- For people who are losing existing coverage, does the state individual mandate act as a motivator to maintain coverage?
- Do messages need to be tailored age-appropriately?
- What is the best way to reach each identified population?
- Digital technology offers the ability to tightly target a specific population's subset. What platforms would implement a multi-group campaign with a variety of directed messages?
- Beyond advertising platforms, what is the best way to directly engage, in-person with the newly-identified populations?

2023 Health Connector Non-group Outreach and Marketing Procurement

The Health Connector published a request for proposals (RFP) for outreach and marketing services on March 8.

- The RFP sought support for a wide range of services such as developing creative material, designing and producing campaign elements, and creating and managing media buy. The RFP generated four responses
- The procurement team put a premium on three areas:
 - Supporting the Health Connector’s racial and health equity initiatives, creating and distributing linguistically- and culturally-appropriate messaging to support the agency’s commitment to improving health care access and equity for everyone
 - Creating compelling messaging and creative materials, with the ability to publicly amplify the messages, focusing on messaging and education to uninsured populations
 - Creating and executing community-based, in-person activities across the Commonwealth
- The Health Connector is seeking a three-year contract, with two one-year extensions at the agency’s discretion, with an expected annual budget of approximately \$1.1 million

2022 Health Connector Non-group Outreach and Marketing Procurement

The procurement selected ASG as the winning bidder.

	Maximum Points	ASG	Bidder B	Bidder C	Bidder D
Outreach and marketing campaign	65	58	59	46	35
Understanding the Health Connector	20	20	20	15	11
Knowledge of media	15	14	15	14	8
Develop creative	15	15	13	10	8
Audience research	5	2	3	3	3
Community partnerships	5	4	5	3	3
Social media	5	3	3	1	2
Program metrics	10	10	5	2	5
Team composition	10	10	8	5	6
Ability to manage	5	5	3	3	3
State and health care	5	5	5	2	3
Financial proposal	5	4	5	2	1
Overall value	10	8	8	6	5
Total score	100	90	85	61	52

2023 Health Connector Non-group Outreach and Marketing Procurement

ASG displayed a history of creatively messaging the Health Connector’s needs of the moment and the ability to create results in improving outreach and visibility, and driving enrollment.

- Throughout its proposal, ASG defined successes from outreach and marketing activities

Open Enrollment (OE) Year	Outreach & Marketing Highlights
OE 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First campaign year resulted in a new high of 63,000 new member enrolled, placed 918 signs
OE 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-third of new enrollments came from target communities, first Day of Coverage activities
OE 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Held 39 community events, new enrollments increased to 65,000
OE 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total enrollments increased 5 percent, increased social media generated more than 1 million impressions
OE 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pandemic OE created a focus on unemployed populations, and larger digital presence, including 10 million paid search and display ads leading to 55,000 clicks to website
OE 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High mark of 138 media interviews, expanded Day of Coverage to Week of Coverage with 27 activities
OE 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • World Cup partnerships created new visibility, enrollment increased 12 percent from OE 2022

2023 Health Connector Non-group Outreach and Marketing Procurement

In their proposal, ASG provided detail in areas that were important to the procurement team and the agency.

- Continued use of available data to identify and appropriately message uninsured populations, including using audience research through a variety of methods to ensure impactful messages
- Effectively highlighting the important messages in a point in time to members and potential new applicants
- Consistently seeking new, creative ways to expand visibility, including identifying new populations and methods of outreach
- Continued outreach to the state's uninsured population, and continued support of the Health Connector's racial and health equity initiatives
- Significant in-person, community-based activities that are important to the Health Connector's outreach and communications strategy
- Ability to quantify activities and use data to target and adjust messaging as necessary
- Appropriate staff and agency time to fulfill the Health Connector's needs across all necessary areas of work, with a mix of both account veterans and fresh voices

Vote

The Health Connector recommends that the Board of Directors authorize the Executive Director to enter into a new Memorandum of Understanding with ASG to support Health Connector outreach and marketing for three years beginning July 1, 2023, with two optional one-year extensions, on the terms described herein. The annual budget impact is approximately \$1.1 million per year, consistent with current non-group outreach and marketing campaigns.